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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IS](#) [NO](#) [KPAL](#)
SUBJECT: NORWAY FOCUSED ON THE MIDDLE EAST: AID,
EVACUATION, AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Classified By: A/DCM Maria Rudensky Silver, reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Norwegian government has focused all of their energy on the situation in the Middle East, hosting an emergency donor conference for Palestinians in Geneva on 14 July, calling in the Israeli Ambassador to Norway to demand an end to hostilities, and promising to engage the US and EU at the "highest levels". The Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs notes that all but a handful of Norwegians have been successfully evacuated from Lebanon, except for approximately 100 citizens who are trapped in south Lebanon. Norwegian newspapers report that Norwegian UN envoys Terje Roed Larsen and Geir O. Pedersen are working "in secret" with UN envoy Vijay Nambiar to come up with a new plan for peace in the Middle East and are engaged in shuttle diplomacy throughout the region to sell the plan as a way out of the current conflict. The outgoing Israeli DCM in Oslo says that Norway needs to focus on the bilateral relationship before moving on the peace process. END SUMMARY.

THE DONOR CONFERENCE AND AID

12. (SBU) On July 14, the Norwegian government hastily convened a conference on increasing humanitarian assistance to address needs in the Palestinian territory. Spain, Sweden, and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland joined Norway as the conference hosts. As a result of the conference, the financial goal of the UN's appeal for humanitarian aid rose from 215 to 385 million USD, of which only one-third is currently funded. On 21 July, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg announced that Norway will donate 32.5 million USD to Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories.

EVACUATIONS

13. (SBU) The Norwegian government has managed to get most of its citizens safely out of Lebanon by bus and by boat. In doing so, they also assisted US citizens on July 18 by taking them on board the car ferry owned by the Norwegian company Leif Hoegh to Cyprus. Only a handful of Norwegian citizens are left in Lebanon, mostly families of Lebanese origin who are trapped in south Lebanon. Norway has announced that they are working with the Israeli government to ensure the safety of these individuals.

NORWEGIAN UN ENVOYS LOOKING FOR A PLACE IN THE PEACE PROCESS

14. (SBU) Norwegian UN envoys Terje Roed Larsen and Geir O. Pedersen have made comments to the press that they are engaged in "secret" diplomacy to resolve the conflict in the Middle East. On 21 July, the daily newspaper Dagbladet noted

that Syria has rebuffed Terje Roed Larsen, claiming that he overstepped his UN mandate in 2004 and is not welcome in Damascus, but that the other high-level UN diplomats, including Vijay Nambiar, are welcome.

ISRAELI VIEWS

15. (C) On 19 July, PolOff met with the outgoing DCM for the Israeli Embassy in Oslo, Tamar Rahamimoff-Honig. She stated that relations with the current GON were better than expected, and that FM Stoere in particular has made it clear that he is interested in involving Norway in a multilateral peace process. However, she noted disappointment with how the bilateral relationship between the two countries has been neglected over the years. She said that Norway should focus on establishing closer bilateral ties before it tries to jump back into the peace process. She stated that there have been no approaches made to the Israeli Embassy in Oslo concerning the new UN peace initiatives.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: The donor conference initiative underscored GON determination to continue to aid the Palestinians through humanitarian relief. The situation in Gaza was quickly eclipsed in the press by the military situation in Lebanon, but the GON's interest in the area is not likely to abate. Whatever the result of UN diplomacy may be, the debate on whether or not the Norwegians would take part in any peace enforcement mission has already commenced. Jan Peterson, head of the Defense Committee in Parliament and a member of a conservative opposition party, has already gone to the press to state that Norway does not have the resources to take part in any military action in the Middle East. Their resources, he noted, must be focused on maintaining the Norwegian mission to Afghanistan and then participating in Darfur. However, another member of the committee, Marit Nybakk from

the ruling coalition's Labor party disagrees and states that despite the limited resources available, it's important that Norway take part in any future force, even if it is a token number of military members. END COMMENT

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